SouthCambs Magazine

www.scambs.gov.uk

Autumn 2025

Changes to postal votes
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New bus routes
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AI boosts planning engagement
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WIN

A Capybara experience at Shepreth Wildlife Park

Turn to page 46

Our Watercourses team have switched from small petrol-powered tools to electric alternatives, as they maintain the district's historic ditches and streams.

News in brief | Financially secure and fit for the future | Healthy and supported communities
Being green to our core | Helping businesses to thrive in South Cambridgeshire
Sustainable homes and vibrant places | Competition

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South Cambridgeshire District Council

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Hello

Welcome to the autumn edition of South Cambs Magazine

We were fortunate to receive many days of sunshine and clear skies this summer, and now it's time to embrace autumn's golden glow. In this issue, we bring you a variety of seasonal events and local stories to celebrate the months ahead.

We've recently launched a new community engagement platform, where you can take part in consultations and surveys to help shape the way we serve you and your community. Learn more on page 8.

Our Low-Income Family Tracker has proven to be a powerful tool, helping residents claim the benefits they're entitled to - but may not have been receiving. Discover how millions of pounds are now supporting local households on page 19.

We're excited to announce the relaunch of our Period Product Scheme which will commence at the end of October. This initiative is designed to support women who are struggling to afford period products, while also giving them the chance to try free, environmentally friendly and sustainable options. Find out more about the scheme on page 28.

On page 31, we're shining a light on Great and Little Shelford and the wonderful businesses to visit when you're next in the area. Plus, ideas of things to do locally this autumn are listed on our Visit South Cambs website.

Our Planning Service has been crowned Planning Authority of the Year – East of England, as well as snapping up other accolades this year. Read about the department's successes on page 41.

Lastly, don't forget to check out the competition on page 46, where you could win a Capybara experience at Shepreth Wildlife Park.

I hope you enjoy reading the magazine.

Cllr Bridget Smith
Leader
South Cambridgeshire District Council

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Winter 2025 issue

The next issue will be delivered between **Monday 24 November and Saturday 6 December.**

Contact Smart Distribution for delivery enquiries.

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Contact us

It's easier to contact us online. You can do more online at a time to suit you.

Chat with SAM, our Artificial Intelligence (AI) Assistant

SAM can help you instantly, or signpost you to the relevant team that can help you further. Just click on the speech bubble icon on our website and ask SAM a question.
www.scambs.gov.uk

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See personalised information – such as your Council Tax payments or your Benefits account.
https://mysouthcambs.scambs.gov.uk

Or you can email us, phone us, write to us, visit our offices, or get in touch using our social media channels.

scdc@scambs.gov.uk
01954 713 000
South Cambridgeshire District Council, South Cambs Hall, Cambourne Business Park, Cambourne, CB23 6EA
South Cambridgeshire District Council
@SouthCambs

If you phone us

Our phone line is available 8am to 5:30pm on weekdays - apart from Wednesdays when it stays open until 6:30pm.

Our AI-powered telephone system makes it easier and faster for you to get the help you need.

When you phone, you'll be asked to briefly explain what your enquiry is about. The more specific you are, the better – our system uses your response to connect you directly with the right advisor, who's trained to deal with your particular issue. Prefer to speak to someone straight away? – you can still choose to speak to an advisor at any time!

This upgrade is all about giving you a smoother and faster service. So next time you call, try to be as specific as possible.

If you visit us

Our office opening hours are 9am to 4pm, Monday to Friday. If you come to the office, we'll try our very best to resolve your query there and then. If we can't, our advisors will book you a follow-up appointment when you will be able to speak to someone from our relevant service. Alternatively, you can book your own appointment at www.scambs.gov.uk/book-an-appointment

Request a large print copy communications@scambs.gov.uk

Putting residents first

If you phone us we will:

- resolve your enquiry as quickly as possible.
- provide voicemail if the person you need is unavailable.
- answer your phone message within three working days.

If you write to us we will:

- reply to your letter or email within 10 working days.

If we write to you we will:

- write in plain language.
- arrange for translation, large type, braille or audio tapes upon request.

If we visit you we will:

- carry identification that you can check with a phone call to us.
- arrive at the time we say we will, or give you as much notice as possible if we have to change the time.

If we get it wrong we will:

- apologise if we have made a mistake or failed to meet our standards.
- acknowledge your written complaint within three working days.
- reply in full to your complaint within 10 working days.

Assisted digital service support

We have set up Assisted Digital Service Support to ensure that nobody is excluded from completing an online application or e-form due to difficulty with digital skills or access to a computer. Eligible customers are offered telephone support or face to face support by one of our contact centre advisors. Your local library or Parish Council hub can also help.

To take advantage of this service, just call us on 01954 713 000.

News in brief

Is your landline ready for the digital switchover?

By January 2027, traditional landlines will be upgraded to digital technology, meaning calls will be made over the internet rather than the old copper network. For most people, it will be a simple change - you'll just need to plug your phone into your broadband router instead of the usual socket.

However, if you rely on your landline for telecare, a personal alarm, or don't have broadband at home, it's important to check what this change means for you.

Connecting Cambridgeshire's Get Ready, Go Digital, Stay Connected campaign is here to help.

Find out more by visiting: **www.connectingcambridgeshire.co.uk/digitalswitchover**

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

You are invited to share your thoughts on the new Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The consultation is live until Thursday 11 September 2025.

Complete the survey online at **yourvoice.cambridgeshire.gov.uk**

Local Nature Recovery Strategies are a new system of strategies designed to reverse biodiversity loss in England and deliver wider environmental benefits. Across the country, 48 local strategies are currently in development or delivery. Your local knowledge will help inform and improve the strategy for our region.

Community Forums

We would be thrilled if you join us at the next round of Community Forums, which are held at various venues throughout the district. These vary in the format, from in person events to online sessions via Microsoft Teams.

For more information, please visit **www.scambs.gov.uk/community-forums**

Upcoming Forums

Northstowe: 10 September & 3 December

North West & West Cambridge: 15 October*

Cambridge East: 22 October

Bourn Airfield & Cambourne: 12 November

Waterbeach: 5 November

North East Cambridge: 19 November*

*Starred dates will take place online

Help choose the next Blue Plaque

Would you like to publicly commemorate a person or event in South Cambridgeshire? Local charity Cambridge Past, Present and Future is inviting nominations for the Cambridge and District Blue Plaque scheme, which celebrates people and events that made a lasting impact locally, nationally, or globally. Plaques have recently been installed in Foxton for paleoanthropologist Louis Leakey, and in Fulbourn for George Brewster, whose tragic death as a Victorian chimney sweep helped end child labour.

To nominate, send an email to **enquiries@cambridgeppf.org** with details of the person or event, the location, and why they matter. Nominees must have died at least 10 years ago. Nominations are especially welcome where supporters are happy to help raise funds.

Find out more at **www.cambridgeppf.org/blue-plaques/**

Stay Active!

Our Active & Healthy 4 Life programme offers local support for a range of health conditions through exercise referral. These take place at all community sports centres, with cardiac rehab at Sawston and Cambourne. Whether you're managing high blood pressure, diabetes, arthritis, asthma, osteoporosis, mental health or recovering from surgery or a cardiac event - expert qualified instructors tailor exercise to your needs and ability. To join, ask your health professional to complete the referral form on our website, then contact your chosen centre to book your first session! Only £20 a month for four months. For Exercise Referral visit **www.scambs.gov.uk/active** and for cardiac rehab visit **www.scambs.gov.uk/cardiac** or email **AandH4L@scambs.gov.uk**

Community fun in Marleigh

Residents of Marleigh gathered for their Summer Fair in July which brought together community groups and local businesses at Marleigh Primary School.

Attendees discovered archaeological objects from Anglo-Saxon to Roman times found in the area with the Cambridge Archaeology Unit, met Bessie the Cambridgeshire Libraries book bike, extracted DNA with Cambridge University's chemistry students, and young people tried out a range of activities led by the Connections youth program. They also enjoyed a Capoeira performance with live Brazilian music, and authentic Chinese dishes by a locally run food truck.

This unassuming neighbourhood event was a true showcase of community connections built over the past five years since the first residents arrived at Marleigh in 2020.

The Marleigh Residents Association (MRA) was established in September 2024 with a mission to represent the views and interests of residents while interacting with planners, developers, estate managers, and other stakeholders. As Marleigh continues to grow, residents and the MRA will play key roles in building a cohesive community.

October Half-Term Netball Camp

Looking for an exciting activity for your child this October half term? Join our popular Netball Camp at Impington Sports Centre on Wednesday 29 October! Open to children in school years three to nine, our camp welcomes players of all abilities. Led by qualified and experienced coaches, the day is packed with game-based activities designed to help children develop new skills, enhance existing techniques, and most importantly - have fun in a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment. Whether your child is new to netball or already a keen player, this is a fantastic opportunity to grow their confidence and love for the game.
Visit our website for full details **www.scambs.gov.uk/sportscamps**

South Cambs Magazine

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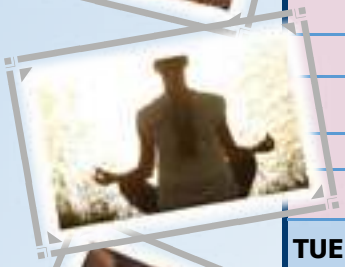
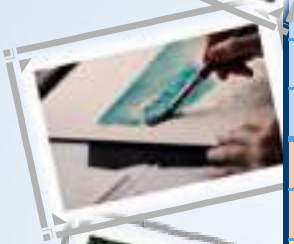
Sawston Adult Learning

ADULT COMMUNITY LEARNING AND LEISURE
COURSE PROGRAMME
AUTUMN TERM 2025

COURSES START WEEK COMMENCING 22ND SEPTEMBER (unless otherwise stated)





DAY	COURSE	TIME	WEEKS	COST
MON	Ceramics - all abilities	19.00-21.00	10	£166
	Curry Delicious (Indian cookery) (Starts 03/11/25)	19.00-21.00	5	£70
	Dressmaking - all abilities	19.00-21.00	10	£136
	Grow your own: Winter vegetable gardening (Starts 29/09/25)	19.00-21.00	8	£108
	Tap Dancing	19.00-20.00	10	£73
	Yoga for All	19.30-20.30	10	£73
TUE	Ceramics - all abilities	19.00-21.00	10	£166
	Guitar for Beginners	19.15-21.15	10	£135
	Italian Advanced Conversation	09.30-11.30	9	£131
	Italian Beginners	16.30-17.30	10	£70
	Italian Intermediate	17.30-18.45	10	£88
	Italian Upper Intermediate	18.45-20.00	10	£88
	Italian Advanced and Conversation	20.00-21.30	10	£103
	Watercolour with Confidence - all abilities	14.30-16.30	10	£140
WED	French Conversation Advanced (Starts 01/10/25)	10.00-12.00	10	£145
	Garden Design - Beginners/Intermediates	19.00-21.00	10	£135
FRI	Friday Singers	09.30-11.15	10	£59

Courses are available each term...

Check out our website for full information.

SATURDAY WORKSHOPS 22ND NOVEMBER 2025

	TIME	COST
Seed Saving and Sowing	10.00-16.00	£42
Willow Christmas Decorations	09.30-12.30	£29
Authentic Thai Food (Thai cookery)	10.00-13.00	£29
Indian Feast for Friends (Indian cookery)	10.00-16.00	£45

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BOOK ONLINE AT
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T: 01223 712424
E: community@sawstonvc.org
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Information correct at time of print.

Have your say using our community engagement platform

Our online engagement platform at www.scambs.gov.uk/consultations is a space for people who live in, work in, or visit South Cambridgeshire to be actively involved in local decision-making.

Our new platform offers a range of participation and engagement opportunities - enabling you to contribute to your community and the decisions that affect it.

Whether you're passionate about community forums in your area, curious about local planning, or want to share your thoughts on our services, there will be a variety of ways for you to get involved - including surveys, voting, meetings, and discussions.

You can follow the progress of the participation and engagement projects that interest you, see the results, and get updates on new events; both online and face-to-face.

We currently have two active surveys where you can share your thoughts on how we're doing - one focused on our services and another on our online and digital offerings.

Have your say

From community forums to public space improvements, we want to hear from residents, businesses, and community groups. The platform hosts ongoing consultations across multiple departments, including Planning, Communities, and Housing. Each survey or consultation provides clear background information, proposed changes, and a simple way for you to submit your views. You may also have the opportunity to attend an in-person event to meet others in your community and have your say on local issues or improvements.

We currently have two active surveys where you can share your thoughts on how we're doing - one focused on our services and another on our online and digital offerings.

Your feedback plays a vital role in shaping how we serve our communities. Whether you're a resident, a local business owner, or someone who regularly interacts with our services, your insights are incredibly valuable.

The surveys only take a few minutes to complete, and we greatly appreciate all feedback.

You can fill this out at **www.scambs.gov.uk/consultations**

You can also get involved through our Community Forums, held quarterly at our growth sites. These forums keep residents up to date on the latest developments and give you the opportunity to help shape your community.

We'd love your feedback on your experience with these forums so we can ensure everyone gets the most out of them. You can do this at **www.scambs.gov.uk/consultations**

Our Deputy Leader Cllr Brian Milnes said:

> **"We want our residents, businesses, and community groups to be involved in shaping the decisions that affect their lives.**
>
> **This new engagement platform is a vital step in making local government more open, accessible and responsive.**
>
> **I encourage everyone to get involved, share their views, and help us build stronger, more connected communities."**

We're excited to share more engagement opportunities with you in the future!

Act now to make sure you stay registered to vote

Every year, our Elections team writes to all households in the district to ensure that the names of voters registered at each address are correct. It's really important that the information we hold is up to date and accurate.

If you haven't already done so, please check that the names on your form are correct and update us with any changes if necessary.

Remember, if you add the names of any new people, they will also need to make a separate application to register at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote

Why it matters

Being registered to vote ensures you are able to vote in elections. The next elections in our area are for our District Councillors, scheduled to take place in May 2026. These will also coincide with elections for all parish and town councils across South Cambridgeshire. You also need to be registered to vote in order to take part in any by-elections, which can happen at any time.

Did you know?

1. **Right now, you can only vote after you turn 18, but you can register to vote from the age of 16!**
2. **Being on the register can help you get approved for credit applications.**
3. **The Jury Service uses the register to select people to sit on juries.**

Do you need to reapply for your postal vote?

The law has changed - postal vote applications no longer last "until further notice." They now expire after three years.

We have recently contacted over 15,000 affected postal voters in South Cambridgeshire to inform them of this change and encourage them to make a fresh application.

If you currently vote by post and have held your postal vote for more than two years, you should make a new application now.

You can apply online at www.gov.uk/apply-postal-vote

If you are an affected postal voter and do not make a new application, your postal vote will be cancelled on Saturday 31 January 2026.

If you have any questions about changes to postal votes, or if you want to cancel your postal vote because you no longer need it, please email our Elections Team at elections@scambs.gov.uk

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Councils work towards local government reorganisation

Last year, national Government said it wanted to implement a new system of local government, removing the current two-tier structure of district / city councils and county councils.

This means from April 2028 you'll access all services, including benefits, bin collections, Council housing, education, planning, road maintenance and social care, through one unitary authority. Parish and town councils will not be affected and will keep working as they do now.

All councils in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have been working together on potential new arrangements. From June into July, thousands of people responded to a joint survey that asked for views on the future of local government.

Data from that survey is informing proposals being developed for three potential options that are being considered.

- South-East option: Cambridge City Council, East Cambridgeshire and South Cambridgeshire District Council
- South option: Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council
- West option: Cambridge City Council, Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire District Council.

All options include County Council functions.

Keep up to date with local government reorganisation at www.scambs.gov.uk/local-government-reorganisation

We, along with Cambridgeshire's other councils, will submit proposals to the Government in November. There will then be a consultation, before Government ultimately makes a final decision.

Council meeting discussions

At our Full Council meeting in July, there were a range of views during a debate on this topic. With South Cambridgeshire surrounding the city of Cambridge, our Leader, Cllr Bridget Smith, indicated a new Greater Cambridge unitary authority is a preferred option.

This new unitary authority would cover approximately 320,000 people and that number is growing.

Many South Cambridgeshire residents look towards Cambridge for some things, whether that be a trip to the cinema, a day at the shops or a family swim at Parkside. A new authority of this size could strike the right balance between efficiency, effectiveness and community engagement – ensuring the number of people each councillor represents does not become so large that the 'local' in local government is lost.

Modelling so far also suggests it could be the right size to achieve efficiencies and better value for residents, along with being big enough to withstand financial shocks that could cause problems for the public sector in future.

We already share key services – Greater Cambridge Shared Planning and Greater Cambridge Shared Waste – with Cambridge City Council. Our Planning service continues to work on a new joint Local Plan – setting out where new homes and jobs will come forward in the decades ahead.

We'll hold an Extraordinary Council Meeting in November to discuss the final proposals we'll be submitting to national Government.

Cllr Bridget Smith said:

> **"Uniting Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire under a single, new unitary authority would reflect the reality of a shared geography and an interdependent economy. This option could better coordinate infrastructure, housing, and transport to support sustainable growth across Greater Cambridge."**

Four-day week boosts recruitment, retention and wellbeing

We have become the UK's first Council to permanently adopt a four-day week – after rigorous independent analysis showed most services got better or were maintained, with significant improvements to recruitment and retention.

Under our four-day week, staff are expected to carry out 100 per cent of their work, in around 85 per cent of their contracted hours, without reduction in pay. Council staff can opt-in to this under a Productivity Policy.

Why did we trial a four-day week?

- To help us attract and keep talented colleagues in an incredibly competitive local employment market.
- To improve our services by filling vacant posts permanently, rather than relying on more expensive agency staff.
- To reduce costs. During the four-day week, we have cut the amount we had to spend over our budgets on staff. There has been a yearly saving of £399,263. This is mainly due to filling many vacancies permanently – rather than using expensive agency workers, which can be disruptive for residents as officers change.

Performance analysis

Independent analysis from the Universities of Salford, Bradford and Cambridge highlighted how 21 of 24 services they monitored have improved or stayed the same since four-day week working began at the Council in 2023. Those areas which saw a statistically significant improvement include the percentage of calls answered by our Contact Centre, the average number of days taken to update Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support claims and the average number of weeks for householder planning applications to be decided.

Recruitment improvements

The number of applications for our jobs rose by more than 120 per cent during the four-day week. Beforehand, only around eight in 10 jobs we advertised were filled – sometimes only five out of every 10. The number of workers leaving fell by more than 40 per cent - helping provide benefits to communities through greater stability of services.

Our Lead Cabinet Member for Resources, Cllr John Williams, said:

> "Since we introduced the four-day week, the difference in recruitment and retention has been remarkable. We've seen job applications more than double, which means we're attracting a much wider pool of talent. At the same time, fewer people are choosing to leave, helping us build more stable teams that deliver more consistent, quality services for residents and businesses. It means we're not constantly re-training new people or relying on expensive agency workers."

SHARED OWNERSHIP HOMES IN CAMBOURNE

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FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT SHARED OWNERSHIP CAN BE FOUND ON OUR WEBSITE https://www.chsgroup.org.uk/looking-to-buy-a-home/ OR

https://www.gov.uk/shared-ownership-scheme

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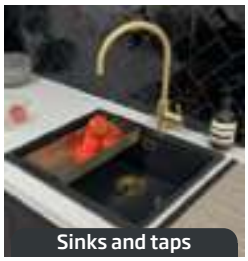
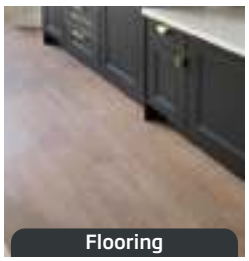
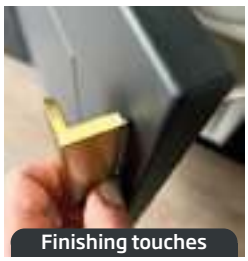
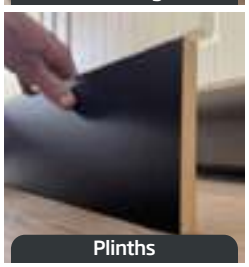

Sinks and taps


Flooring

Appliances


Finishing touches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A community group with big ideas

Sheddit! is a Swavesey-based group that brings people together through creative, hands-on activities. Their aim is to reduce loneliness, teach new skills, and help people make friends.

Around 30 members meet regularly to work on self-chosen projects, either alone or in groups. Their focus is on sharing, repairing and recycling - helping the planet as well as their community.

In 2022, Sheddit launched its Sustainability Hub with help from a £1,314 Community Chest grant from us. Over 300 people attended the launch event, which featured recycled crafts, a clothes swap, and Swavesey's first repair café. Visitors brought broken items to fix and took part in family-friendly activities such as building bird boxes and making eco-friendly gifts.

The following year, Sheddit received another £1,795 from our Community Chest for a biodiversity project. They handed out free wildflower seeds and native trees and created new planting areas using compost and woodchip. With support from an ecologist and local volunteers, the aim is to support local wildlife – even during dry weather. The group is now working with Swavesey Parish Council to create a biodiversity map.

Their biggest project so far is Share, Borrow, Connect - a mobile Library of Things. This solar-powered van, supported by a £14,130 grant from our Zero Carbon Communities fund, travels to villages and lets people borrow useful items like tools and camping gear. Sharing resources saves money and cuts down on carbon emissions.

To get involved with Sheddit! contact shedditmensshed@gmail.com

Sheddit! is a Swavesey-based group that brings people together through creative, hands-on activities.

If 1,000 homes each bought their own drill, it would cost £200,000 and produce 50,000kg of CO_2. Sharing just 10 drills would cost £2,000 and create only 500kg of CO_2.

This Library of Things also runs repair workshops. One event, funded with £850 from our Community Chest, saw 30 children take apart broken gadgets and learn how to fix them – a fun way to reduce waste and inspire young minds.

Sheddit! aims to reduce loneliness, teach new skills, and help people make friends.

Our Lead Cabinet Member for Communities, Cllr Henry Batchelor, said:

> **"Sheddit! is a shining example of what happens when creativity, community spirit, and sustainability come together. Their projects reduce waste and carbon emissions, but also bring people together, tackle loneliness, and inspire the next generation. We're proud to support them through our Community Chest and Zero Carbon Communities grants, and we look forward to seeing their impact grow even further."**

To apply for Community Chest funding, email community.chest@scambs.gov.uk

Safe, warm spaces that are here to help you

The network of community hubs across South Cambridgeshire is open through the autumn and into the winter, and ready to welcome you.

With free refreshments and good company, Cambridgeshire ACRE's safe and warm community hubs welcome hundreds of residents from across the district every week.

Cambridgeshire ACRE is a rural development charity that is proud to deliver the Community Hubs Network. Hubs are truly community-led; coordinated and hosted by trained volunteers within the heart of local communities.

Many have regular speakers and activities and some offer digital champions to help you get online or provide digital support.

You can also get free, independent and confidential information and advice from a team of trusted Village Agents on things like:

- Cost of living
- Household bills and saving money
- Community transport
- Local social groups
- Health and care services and support
- Help applying for benefits, food vouchers, Blue Badges or bus passes
- Online forms and information

The hubs across South Cambridgeshire are funded by us, using money provided by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care System's South Place Partnership.

Testimonials:

"Coming to the hub really helped get me out of the house again when my husband died. They are such nice, caring people."
- Duxford resident

"The hub helps me a lot with loneliness."
- Melbourn resident

"I love getting out of the house and seeing people here."
- Caldecote resident

"Thank you for the fantastic work that you and the Cambs ACRE team do for our rural communities and their hubs. Your information, advice and guidance, plus all your active and enthusiastic support, do make a genuine difference. Thanks to the Community Hubs initiative, we are able to impact on the lives of many local people. Their appreciation of our joint efforts makes it all very worthwhile."
- Community Hub Volunteer

Our Lead Cabinet Member for Communities, Cllr Henry Batchelor, said:

> **"The Community Hubs are a lifeline for many. They help to combat social isolation, as well as supporting residents with checking their eligibility for benefits or completing online forms."**

Find your local hub

There are hubs in Bassingbourn, Caldecote, Cambourne, Duxford, Girton, Grantchester, Hardwick, Horningsea, Landbeach, Linton, Melbourn, Meldreth, Northstowe, Teversham, Toft, West Wickham, Weston Colville, The Wilbrahams and Willingham.

For full details of venues, opening days and times, check online, call or email:

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Helping residents secure millions of pounds in benefits not being claimed

We're proud to have helped residents on lower incomes secure up to £3.4 million in benefits they're entitled to – but weren't claiming.

The support has been made possible thanks to our innovative Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT) software which identifies households likely to be eligible for benefits but not claiming them.

Once identified, residents are sent a letter or text encouraging them to apply – with follow-up phone calls also made.

For example, we identified households who were eligible for Pension Credit but weren't claiming it, with over 110 households now claiming as a result. If they remain eligible for the rest of their lives, these households will receive up to £3.2 million in Pension Credit between them.

Meanwhile, South Cambridgeshire is the district which has seen the biggest increase in NHS Healthy Start claims in the country, following our similarly targeted approach by using LIFT.

This scheme provides eligible parents with free food and milk for their children. Our intervention is projected to distribute nearly £60,000 of previously unclaimed funds, with these impressive results receiving national recognition.

As a result of LIFT, at least 246 South Cambridgeshire residents have seen their incomes increase. Between them, they are projected to share a total of almost £3.4 million in benefits over their lifetimes.

The campaign has been shortlisted as a finalist in two national awards, and we hope for more good news after the winners are announced later this year!

Our Lead Cabinet Member for Communities, Cllr Henry Batchelor, said:

> **"Too often, people miss out on the support they're entitled to - not because they don't need it, but because the system doesn't see them, and they are just not aware there's help available. That's where this innovative example of how we are using data comes in.**
>
> **This work helps us find the gaps, those who are not aware, and the people who are falling through the cracks. When we use data with a clear purpose like this, we turn insight into real-life benefits for households across South Cambridgeshire. We make sure benefits don't just exist – but they reach the people they were designed for.**
>
> **It's an innovative way that we can create healthy and supported communities as part of a fairer, kinder and greener South Cambridgeshire. For every £1 that we are investing into this initiative – we are generating about £36 for residents which is an exceptional return."**

Find out what benefits may be available to you at www.scambs.gov.uk/benefits

Improved bus connections for communities

Over the past year, several bus services have launched across Cambridgeshire, helping to better connect our villages with key destinations like Cambridge city centre, local business parks, hospitals, and rail stations.

Tiger on demand: Flexible travel for rural villages

One of the biggest developments for rural communities in South Cambridgeshire has been the launch of Tiger on Demand - a flexible new transport service offering residents the ability to book travel when they need it, rather than relying on fixed bus timetables.

Tiger on Demand operates Monday to Saturday, 6:30am to 7pm. Journeys can be booked up to 48 hours in advance using the Tiger on Demand app, or by calling 01480 595 440. Residents can travel between virtual bus stops located throughout the zone.

The quickest and easiest way to book is by downloading the Tiger on Demand app, available on Google Play and App Store. You can also book at www.tigerondemand.co.uk or over the phone by calling 01480 595 440.

TIGER On Demand

New Tiger routes for South Cambs

As part of the wider Tiger Bus Network, new Tiger bus routes launched in May 2025 are offering South Cambs residents faster, more frequent journeys:

- **Tiger 1:** A fast, express route linking Huntingdon to Cambridge via Fenstanton, Swavesey, Longstanton, and Oakington - perfect for commuters and those connecting via the Guided Busway.
- **Tiger 2** links Milton Park and Ride, Impington, Cambridge North Station, Eddington, and Madingley Road Park and Ride, offering strong links into North and West Cambridge.
- **Tiger 3** connects Fulbourn, Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge Biomedical Campus, Trumpington Park and Ride, and Great Shelford - serving healthcare staff and students accessing city campuses.
- **Tiger 4 and 5:** B1102 corridor - Newmarket to Addenbrooke's via Burwell and Soham (hourly).
- **Tiger 12:** Longstanton Park and Ride to Sutton via Willingham and Earith (hourly).

These services are designed to fill gaps in the network and improve access to jobs, education, and healthcare.

Download on the App Store

GET IT ON Google Play

Further improvements

As part of the Better Buses scheme, several key existing services were also improved in South Cambridgeshire:

- **Route 4:** Cambourne to Cambridge - frequency increased (from 30 to 20-minute intervals).
- **Route 8:** Enhanced frequency, more direct route, and extended to Rampton.
- **X13:** Haverhill to Cambridge - improved service levels.

Additionally, Whippet service 18/18A was enhanced between St Neots, Cambourne, and Cambridge to better serve college students and rural communities.

Other enhancements

- **Busway:** A new Orchard Park stop added as part of the Waterbeach Busway project, providing direct access to Cambridge North Station.
- **X13 and Route 4:** Frequency increases and peak/off-peak enhancements around Addenbrooke's and Cambridge - Parnwell.
- **X2:** Now includes an additional evening peak journey between Cambridge and Huntingdon, plus a new stop in Coton.
- **X3:** Frequency increased to every 30 minutes between Central Cambridge and Huntingdon.
- **100:** Waterbeach to Cambridge City with stops in Fen Ditton and Horningsea, half-hourly peak journeys on weekdays and Saturdays, and hourly on Sundays - funded by Urban and Civic.

Greenways are helping get students to school and college

This update is from the Greater Cambridge Partnership which we are a part of.

The school run can be stressful. Before shoelaces are tied, helmets are buckled, or you've found your keys, planning how to get your children to school in a safe, healthy, and reliable way can be daunting, especially when there's a lack of high-quality cycling and walking links.

The Greater Cambridge Partnership is working to change that with the introduction of the greenways - a 150km network of 12 walking, cycling and wheeling routes designed to better connect South Cambridgeshire's students with schools and colleges in a safe and accessible way by creating new and improved paths and safer crossings.

So far, the improvements are already having a positive impact on better connecting students to their schools. Meanwhile, work continues to deliver the rest of the greenways programme to ensure more students have access to safe walking, cycling and wheeling routes.

The path between Melbourn and Meldreth station has been upgraded with lighting and a wider, all-weather surface for students travelling to schools in both Melbourn and Meldreth, as well as those taking the train into Cambridge.

Following the completion of all works on the Horningsea Greenway, students now have better access to Fen Ditton Primary School thanks to new pedestrian crossings, reduced walking distances across junctions, a wider off-road walking and cycling path, and better lighting as well as lowered speed limits creating a safer experience.

Works to create safer crossings and footpaths in Barton are well under way which include: introducing additional traffic calming measures to support the extension of the 20mph speed limit, widening and resurfacing footpaths, and providing dedicated crossing points to help more students get to Barton C of E Primary School without the need of a car.

The Horningsea Greenway makes it safer for children get to Fen Ditton Primary School.

Making it easier and safer for pupils to get to school.

In Comberton, it's been made easier and safer for students to get to Comberton Village College and Meridian Primary School. This included building a new pedestrian and cycle crossing directly outside Comberton Village College, and improving the layout of the Kentings and Barrons Way junction to encourage slower and safer vehicle movements and easier crossings for pedestrians.

On Adams Road, England's first cycle street is being developed. A safer and more accessible route will be created for the more than 3,000 daily cyclists who travel to nearby colleges and the sports ground.

Meanwhile, progress continues across the district on all 11 remaining routes.

For more information, please visit: **www.greatercambridge.org.uk/greenways**

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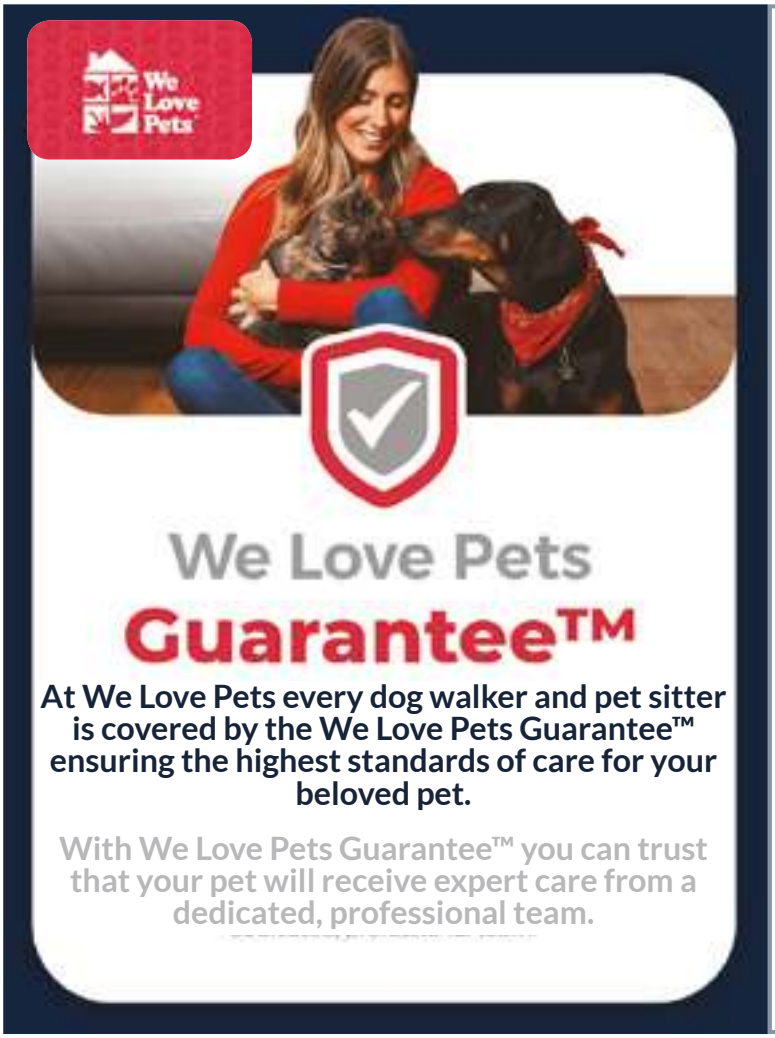

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Being green to our core

Bin collection calendar

Bins must be put out by 6am on your collection day. Close lids fully. Please report missed collections between 3:30pm on collection day and 3:30pm the next working day.

For advice on how to leave out extra recycling for collection and other policies, or to report a missed bin, visit www.scambs.gov.uk/bins

Green bins start their four-weekly cycle from week beginning Monday 8 December and will return to fortnightly from week beginning Monday 2 March 2026.

NEVER BIN BATTERIES OR VAPES
They cause fires in our bin lorries, and must be recycled separately.

Vapes can be taken back to vape shops, supermarkets, petrol stations or to the large Household Recycling Centres for recycling.

Small household batteries can be put in a small plastic bag, tied shut and left on the top of your bin on collection day. Larger batteries such as e-bike batteries should be taken to Household Recycling Centres.

GROUP A

TUESDAY

Coton, Great and Little Chishill, Great Shelford, Heydon, Hinxton, Ickleton, Little Shelford, South Trumpington, Stapleford, Whittlesford

WEDNESDAY

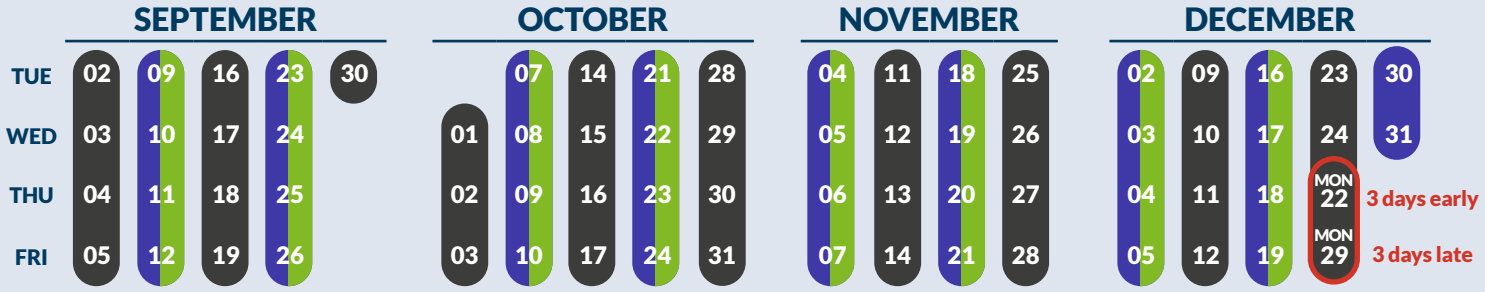
Balsham, Carlton, Fen Ditton, Fulbourn, Great Wilbraham, Horningsea, Horseheath, Landbeach, Little Wilbraham, Six Mile Bottom, Stow-Cum-Quy, Teversham, Waterbeach, West Wickham, West Wratting, Weston Colville

THURSDAY

Abington Pigotts, Barton, Bassingbourn, Caldecote, Chittering, Comberton, Grantchester, Great Eversden, Guilden Morden, Hardwick, Harlton, Haslingfield, Kingston, Litlington, Little Eversden, Madingley, Milton, Odsey, Orchard Park, Orwell, Shingay-Cum- Wendy, Steeple Morden, Toft, Whaddon, Wimpole

FRIDAY

Boxworth, Childerley, Conington, Croxton, Elsworth, Eltisley, Fen Drayton, Graveley, Knapwell, Longstanton, Northstowe, Papworth Everard, Papworth St. Agnes, Swavesey



Blue and green bin | Black bin only | Blue bin only | Change of date

GROUP B

TUESDAY

Barrington, Duxford, Fowlmere, Foxton, Harston, Hauxton, Melbourn, Meldreth, Newton, Shepreth, Thriplow

WEDNESDAY

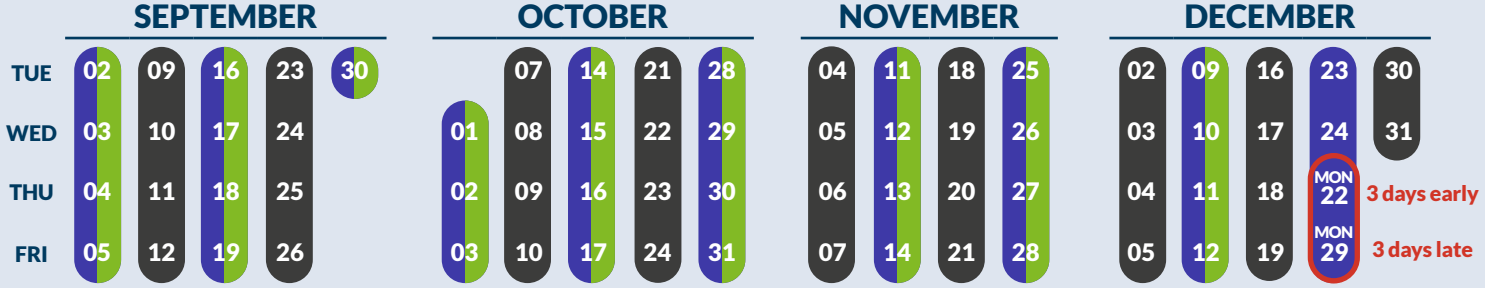
Babraham, Bartlow, Castle Camps, Great Abington, Hildersham, Horseheath (Cardinal's Green), Linton, Little Abington, Pampisford, Sawston, Shudy Camps

THURSDAY

Arrington, Bar Hill, Bourn, Cambourne, Caxton, Croydon, Dry Drayton, Gamlingay, Girton, Hatley, Little Gransden, Lolworth, Longstowe, Tadlow

FRIDAY

Cottenham, Histon, Impington, Oakington & Westwick, Over, Rampton, Willingham



What can you **recycle** through your blue bin?

Yes

Remember to rinse food containers

✓Clean ✓Empty ✓Don't bag it

Cardboard

Paper & magazines

Tins, cans & foil

Aerosol cans

Shredded paper *(in envelope or clear sack)*

Glass bottles & jars

Cartons

Plastic pots, tubs, trays & empty bags

Plastic bottles

Please put used batteries in a clear plastic bag and NOT in your bin.
Place the bag on top of any of your wheelie bins. Batteries must not be put inside the bin. Small portable household batteries can be put in the clear bag - e.g. AA, AAA, 6v, 9v, D, C, button. Do not include mobile phone or laptop batteries. Instead take these to a Household Recycling Centre.

No

- ✗ Black bin bags or rubbish
- ✗ Nappies, tissues, kitchen paper, wipes & sanitary waste
- ✗ Polystyrene
- ✗ Glasses, flat glass or glass dishes
- ✗ Mirrors, Pyrex, plates/ crockery

The following can be recycled elsewhere – check our website.

- ✗ Clothing and textiles
- ✗ Food, liquid or garden waste
- ✗ Wood, plasterboard & DIY waste
- ✗ Furniture or electricals
- ✗ Scrap metal e.g. pans
- ✗ Hard plastics e.g. bucket
- ✗ Crisp packets

What can you **compost** through your green bin?

Yes

Untreated wood and sawdust

Garden waste

Cooked/uncooked food waste (including meat, fish and dairy)

Used paper tissues and kitchen paper

No

- ✗ Plastic & plastic bags
- ✗ Compostable bags e.g. Biobags
- ✗ Nappies, wipes and sanitary waste
- ✗ Soil or stones
- ✗ Painted or treated wood
- ✗ Cat or dog waste
- ✗ Plant pots and seedling trays
- ✗ Loose ash (wood ash CAN go in the green bin, but only if enclosed in paper bags)

What **rubbish** can go in your black bin?

Yes

Please try to reduce rubbish that cannot be recycled or composted

General rubbish
including nappies, wipes, sanitary waste, polystyrene, broken crockery or glassware (wrapped).

No

- ✗ Rubble/bricks
- ✗ Soil
- ✗ Very heavy items
- ✗ Electrical items
- ✗ Batteries
- ✗ Loose ash or vacuum dust. Please bag.

Not sure if it can be recycled? Check the 'What goes in which bin?' page on our website, via www.scambs.gov.uk/bins for hundreds more items.

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No waste, no worries

Our free environmentally-friendly period products scheme is going to return.

A partnership to offer free period products to residents has been such a success that we are running it again this autumn!

Last year, following a motion from Cllr Heather Williams which was backed by our Full Council, we teamed up with social enterprise Hey Girls to distribute 407 free packs of reusable period products – and the scheme is back in October.

Residents struggling to afford period products can choose a reusable item free of charge and have it delivered to their home. Each recipient could save up to £130 per year by making the switch, and the scheme could save up to two tonnes of waste from disposable products going to landfill.

Our scheme will relaunch during Environmenstrual Week, from 20 – 24 October, so check our website for details. The week is a chance to promote eco-friendly period products and raise awareness about the environmental impact of disposables.

What are the main reusable period product options?

Washable pads – fabric versions of disposable pads that can be washed and used again and again. A set of five usually costs around £40 and will last up to 10 years.

Period pants – leakproof knickers which can absorb the same as two tampons although they are only 3mm thick. A pair usually costs around £20 and lasts for up to five years.

Menstrual cup – a silicone cup used internally to collect menstrual blood. It is emptied every 12 hours and can be rinsed and re-used straight away. Cups cost around £20 and last up to 10 years.

Find out more about reusable period product options at www.wen.org.uk/environmenstrualweek

As well as the free reusable period products scheme, there are two other schemes available to South Cambridgeshire residents:

- As members of the RECAP waste partnership, residents can order a Mooncup menstrual cup for just £5 including delivery (usual cost £23.50). Find out more at www.recap.co.uk
- We partner with a selection of suppliers to offer discounts of 10-20% off reusable period products, as well as incontinence products, wipes and nappies under our Zero-Waste Products Discount Scheme. Find out more at www.scambs.gov.uk/zero-waste-nappies-wipes-and-periods

Did you know that disposable wipes and period products should never be flushed down the toilet?

Sewage systems are designed to cope with the three Ps of poo, pee and paper. When other items are flushed, they cause blocked pipes, which are expensive to fix. Worse, during storms sewage can be discharged into local rivers, releasing wipes, tampons and pads, which all contain plastic, into waterways and seas, causing plastic pollution.

Unblocktober is an annual campaign each October to raise awareness of the impact of flushing period products and wipes down the toilet. Find out more and make a pledge at www.unblocktober.org.

Have your say on plans for our future climate and nature work

After declaring climate and ecological emergencies in 2019, we agreed to urgently reduce emissions from the running of our services, and to support the wider district in reaching net zero by 2050.

Alongside this, we committed to safeguarding nature in South Cambridgeshire, working on our own land and with partners to tackle biodiversity loss. You can read more in our Zero Carbon and Doubling Nature strategies, available on our website.

Since 2019, we have…

- Tackled emissions from our bin lorries, with four electric lorries now in use and others powered using low carbon fuels.
- Retrofitted our main office building to an A energy rating, reducing energy use.
- Replaced streetlights we are responsible for with energy efficient LEDs.
- Worked with partner councils as part of Action on Energy, providing free home energy efficiency improvements to eligible households.
- Completed a full stock audit of our Council housing and secured funding to bring 610 of the worst performing properties to at least C energy ratings over the next four years.
- Planted over 750 trees through our Six Free Trees for parishes scheme.
- Supported more than 70 community-led climate action projects through our Zero Carbon Communities scheme - distributing over £625,000 in grants.

We're proud of our achievements, but we must go further to ensure a cleaner, greener, zero carbon future for our communities. That's why we're currently developing a new Climate and Nature Strategy to guide our work for the next five years. This new combined strategy recognises the important links between climate and nature.

Our Lead Cabinet Member for Environment, Cllr Natalie Warren-Green, said:

> **"When we speak to people living and working in the district, we hear they care deeply about avoiding the worst effects of climate change, and ensuring we protect our natural environment for future generations. There are some very active environment action groups across South Cambridgeshire who engage with us constantly which is very useful, and I am pleased to spend time at their events to really understand the local area issues. Many key issues facing our communities – fuel poverty, food insecurity, rural isolation and access to quality green space – can be addressed as we take climate action.**
>
> **This new strategy will focus on priority areas where we can have the greatest impact on carbon emissions, and climate resilience. These key areas include clean energy, biodiversity, engagement and collaboration, and sustainable food practices."**

Consultation for the new Climate and Nature Strategy will open at the end of September and will run to the beginning of November. We invite everyone to have their say and let us know their views on our proposed strategy. Hearing the views of residents is an essential step, allowing us to access new ideas and suggestions, consider all views, and shape our actions around residents' needs and aspirations.

The consultation will run on our online engagement platform. You can sign up to receive a notification when the consultation is live at **www.scambs.gov.uk/consultations**

We will also be looking to engage key stakeholders at our Local Climate Action Conference, due to be held in October. Email **ZCC@scambs.gov.uk** to subscribe to our Zero Carbon Communities mailing list and receive updates on this event.

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Spotlight on the Shelfords

Great Shelford, as residents will tell you, has a thriving high street filled with local enterprise, where independent businesses flourish with the unwavering support of its local community.

From morning coffees to evening meals, there's a steady, rhythmic heartbeat of community buzz that brings people together in one of South Cambridgeshire's most recognisable villages.

There's no shortage of food and drink to enjoy, with traditional pubs like The Plough and Square and Compasses occupying the high street and offering plenty of choice to local punters. While the former boasts live sports, the latter focuses on classic pub grub and hearty Sunday roasts - take your pick! Little Shelford will show its cards now: The Side Quest - the Shelfords' newest pub - is a characterful yet cosy establishment serving high-quality food with options to suit everyone. Adding variety and flavour to the mix are Zara Indian Cuisine and The Forum Chinese restaurant, which bring authentic aromatic dishes to the table and a global touch to this rural setting.

Want to see your village under the spotlight? Email us at OpenForBusiness@scambs.gov.uk

Coffee and cake? Look no further than Cara Coffee, the community-run social space where conversation flows as easily as the delicious drinks. It's a place where conversations start, friendships grow, and every purchase contributes to something bigger at Romsey Mill. It's coffee with kindness - and a lot of heart too.

Great Shelford boasts a rich mix of independent businesses, making it a unique place to shop. A perfect example is Shelford Deli, which stocks a diverse selection of fresh and artisan goods and is also home to Iris Home and Lifestyle, a homeware concession brimming with stylish ceramics and chic accessories. NY Wines Shop and Bar is a sophisticated option for discerning drinkers and sharp-eyed shoppers, while Barker Bros on the high street remains a much-loved, family-run butchery specialising in quality, locally sourced meat. These fine businesses come with personality and passion - service is personal, and every detail matters.

Beyond the shops, the village offers plenty of ways to keep active or unwind. The Gog Magog Golf Club remains a very popular course, and Great Shelford Tennis Club is open to all ages and abilities at the large recreation ground. Whether it's a morning on the fairway, afternoon walks, or the weekly Country Market at Memorial Hall, these spaces shape the community. As residents will tell you, they don't just shop in the Shelfords - they invest in local and independent businesses, sustaining a high street that truly reflects the vibrancy of the village.

Our Lead Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Cllr Peter McDonald, said:

> **"Great Shelford is a shining example of how a village can thrive when the community supports its local businesses. The high street is full of character. We're proud to celebrate the people and places that make the Shelfords such a special part of South Cambridgeshire."**

Visit South Cambs this autumn

What does autumn mean to you? Walking the dog through Milton Country Park, watching the leaves changing colour? Picking pumpkins with the family at Bury Lane Farm? Enjoying a refreshing pint of beer after an afternoon stroll with friends on our Rail and Ale Trail?

Why not check out our website www.visitsouthcambs.co.uk which showcases places to go and things to do to make memorable days out.

From 12 to 21 September there are Heritage Open Days offering an opportunity to step into the past and visit historic buildings across the district for free. Visit Denny Abbey and The Farmland Museum or discover how to research your family tree at All Saints Church in Cottenham, where there's an opportunity to enjoy the view from the top of the tower – weather permitting. Details are still being announced so keep an eye on the website. Last year Town End Close Nature Reserve, Landbeach Tithe Barn and the American Cemetery and Memorial at Madingley took part too.

British Food Fortnight, which runs from 26 September to 12 October, is a great opportunity to support our fabulous farm shops and sample farm-fresh produce. Flourish in Hildersham, Bury Lane in Melbourn, Woodview in Gamlingay, Frank's Farm in Elsworth and Willow Grange in Chittering are among those providing a wide range of fresh locally sourced ingredients.

Delis and bakeries like Webbsour in Elsworth, Burwash Larder in Barton, Linton Kitchen and The Old Butchers in Balsham also offer a range of tasty treats, many made onsite.

We're rightly proud of the range of regular local markets that take place in South Cambridgeshire. From Orwell Pannier Market – the region's oldest – to Haslingfield Village Market – the newest – you'll find fruit, veg, baked goods, meat and fish, jams and chutneys, as well as crafts, toiletries, jewellery and antiques.

Stuck for October half-term activities? New for this year is a Halloween trail at Wimpole Estate, while there's arts and crafts and other children's activities at several venues including Denny Abbey and the Farmland Museum, Northstowe Tap and Social, Stapleford Granary and various libraries around the region. Bushcraft techniques are being taught to children aged from five to 12 years at Wandlebury Country Park.

Our Lead Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Cllr Peter McDonald, said:

> **"Autumn in South Cambridgeshire is a special time when our countryside comes alive with colour and communities come together to celebrate local heritage, food, and traditions. Whether you're exploring historic landmarks during Heritage Open Days, picking up fresh produce at a village market, or simply enjoying a walk, there's something for everyone. I encourage residents and visitors to make the most of the season and discover the many hidden gems our district has to offer."**

Hospitality, leisure and independent retail businesses can promote their services with a free listing on Visit South Cambs. Event and market organisers can also advertise on the site too. Just use the QR code above or visit www.visitsouthcambs.co.uk/free-listings/

Support to stay healthy, happy and in work

WorkWell is a free, voluntary service, offering employees an opportunity to talk confidentially about their work and health needs.

Delivered in South Cambridgeshire by CPSL Mind, WorkWell aims to prevent people falling out of work due to a disability or health condition. It also supports employees in managing a condition when they return to work from a sickness absence.

Participants access a Work and Health Coach, and together they agree next steps as part of a personalised action plan which will signpost to the full range of locally available support.

Employers who connect their employees to initiatives like WorkWell create healthier, more productive teams. By fostering a supportive work environment, businesses can reduce staff turnover, increase morale, and boost overall efficiency.

WorkWell is intended to complement, not replace, existing human resources, occupational health or health support offers. Employees do not need to be claiming any Government benefits to access the service.

WorkWell is open to employers as well as individuals - with consent they can refer employees to the scheme.

Visit www.cpslmind.org.uk/how-we-help/the-workwell-programme for more information and to sign up.

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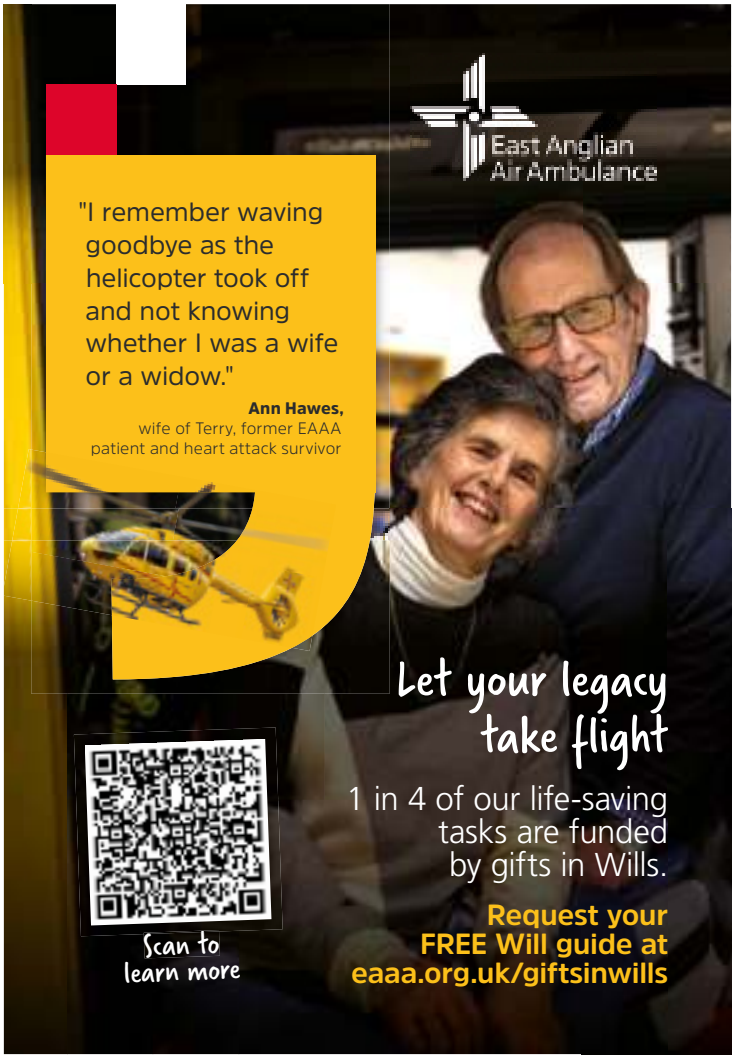
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Winner of the Red Dot and Good Design Awards, *Stylish* is one of the slimmest (189mm deep) wall mounted units on the market and achieves the best in comfort, energy efficiency, reliability and control.

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Many thanks to your team for their hard work, its very much appreciated especially as they were installing it in a big thunderstorm." - Kate

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reddot award 2018 winner

Supporting our tenants with hoarding

Hoarding is a very sensitive and complex issue that can have far-reaching effects on families and neighbourhoods. It is often accompanied by untidy and overgrown gardens which can attract vermin and unpleasant smells.

The reasons why someone might hoard are varied and can include issues such as severe depression, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), or other disorders, such as schizophrenia. It can also be triggered by childhood events or a traumatic experience.

Our Housing Enforcement team work closely with our Council tenants to provide support and make their homes safe. They do this by:

- Working with the fire service to carry out risk assessments.
- Providing additional fire safety adaptations to the home based on fire service recommendations.
- Offering practical support and guidance on creating a safer home.
- Safeguarding referrals to external agencies if necessary.

Our Lead Cabinet Member for Housing, Cllr John Batchelor, said:

> **"Our Housing Enforcement team has a mental health support worker to help support tenants with further needs. They also work with multiple agencies to ensure we are not just dealing with the immediate issue, but that support is ongoing and underlying issues can be supported."**

In cases where help is not accepted there are other options we have to make a property safe, such as notice of seeking possession or warrants to gain access.

Case 1

We supported a tenant of a hoarded house and overgrown garden which enabled them to feel more in control and create a better environment for their surrounding neighbours. It was the catalyst to work more closely with the resident. The improvements resulted in:

- A reduction in neighbour complaints.
- Improved engagement from the tenant.
- The resident feeling more listened to and supported by us.

Case 2

The team also supported a tenant with multiple complex needs, both physical and mental health. They were physically unable to complete tasks in the home, and were distressed as their grandchildren could not play safely. The tenant had been ignoring all correspondence from our Housing team, had rent arrears and under occupancy tax. They were suffering with a severe depressive disorder, but since we started providing support, they are now improving. The enforcement team supported with getting:

- A benefits review.
- An Occupational Therapist assessment.
- A Discretionary Housing Payment.
- An application for Personal Independence Payment.
- Referral to NHS Talking Therapy to assist with their mental health.

Support and useful information:

NHS www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/hoarding-disorder

Mind www.mind.org.uk/hoarding 0300 102 1234

Hoarding Disorders UK hoardingdisordersuk.org 0330 133 2310

OCD Action www.ocdaction.org.uk 0300 636 5478

New rules for renting: How Shire Homes can help

The Renters' Rights Bill introduces wide-ranging reforms to the rental market and with it, new challenges for landlords. But Shire Homes, our not-for-profit, ethical private sector leasing scheme, is here to help.

New challenges for landlords include:

- Strengthened protections for tenants against eviction, including the abolition of Section 21 evictions.
- A new Private Rented Sector Landlord Ombudsman for tenant-landlord complaint resolution.
- Application of the Decent Homes Standard and 'Awaab's Law' to the private rented sector.
- A ban on discrimination against prospective tenants who receive benefits or have children.

With these changes, some landlords may be considering leaving the rental market due to the added stress and uncertainty.

Shire Homes offers a solution for those concerned about how these changes may affect their workload. We provide a stress-free, worry-free way to stay in the market.

We also specialise in bringing empty properties back into use - saving property owners money by avoiding maintenance costs and empty property taxes, while turning these properties into stable, long-term investments that benefit both owners and local communities.

Interested?

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Earlier this year, we helped bring a property that its owner was struggling to sell, back into use. This allowed the owner to make the most of their asset, generating rental income and providing a home for someone in need, rather than letting the property stand empty. The owner said:

> "I have been impressed by the Shire Homes team since I decided to become one of their landlords. I really support the ethos of the team and am delighted to support people accessing good quality housing who may not otherwise be able to do so on the open rental market."

SHIRE HOMES LETTINGS

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- **Guaranteed rent:** Enjoy reliable income every month, even when the property is vacant. The scheme is backed by us as a Council, ensuring government-backed rental income and a commitment to secure housing solutions.
- **No tenant management:** We handle everything - from sourcing tenants to ongoing property management. No more late-night calls or maintenance headaches!
- **No hidden fees:** Unlike traditional letting agents, we don't charge any fees for tenant sourcing, property management, or maintenance.
- **Property maintenance:** We take care of all minor repairs and maintenance, keeping your property in top condition with no effort required from you.
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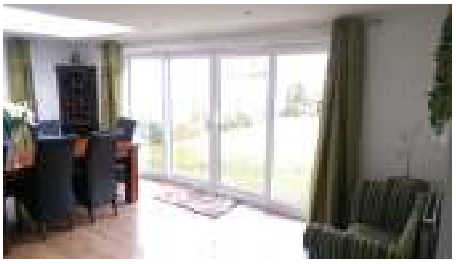

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LABC BUILDING EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2017 REGIONAL FINALIST

Designing future art: Community and youth in action

We're proud to have supported young voices to influence future development in Whittlesford.

More than 30 year five pupils from William Westley C of E Primary School visited The Recodery, a laboratory and new headquarters for Constructive Bio, a synthetic biology company in Whittlesford.

The visit just before the school summer holidays was part of a youth engagement workshop run by our award-winning Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Youth Engagement Service (YES) and the developer, Gen Two. The sessions gave local children a chance to share their views about proposals for further redevelopment for research and development buildings near Whittlesford's railway station.

Children explored the wider site and learnt about placemaking. They also attended a tour of Recodery to learn about life science. In addition, they were given a careers talk to consider a career in town planning and urban design.

They were then invited to create a piece of artwork for part of the building via a design competition, which will be included in the final design subject to planning approval. Prizes were awarded for the most imaginative designs. Their input will help enhance a visible part of the development, facing the railway line, and contribute to a more engaging public space.

Photo credit: So-Motive

Photo credit: So-Motive

Community gets creative with public art in Sawston

Elsewhere, our Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service Public Art Advisory Service and YES hosted a public art community engagement workshop at the Spicers Pavilion in Sawston. The event back in May, run in collaboration with artists Charley Peters and Stewart Chromik, and developer Sam Walker from Canmoor, invited local residents and businesses to help shape a new public art feature at Accelerator Park - a life science and office development in the village.

Participants of all ages explored public art, expressing their visions through science-themed templates. These drawings, analysed by Charley Peters and her team, will influence the final artwork.

In the lead-up to the event, YES also ran workshops with 30 Year Five pupils from Icknield Primary School to gather children's ideas for the proposed public art feature.

Our Lead Cabinet Member for Planning, Cllr Dr. Tumi Hawkins, attended and reflected on the event:

> **"It's been a pleasure to support today's public art initiative. Seeing children, parents, and grandparents come together to actively participate in the design process was truly inspiring. This workshop reaffirms the power of public art in bringing communities together and fostering meaningful engagement."**

Photo credit: So-Motive

Celebrating success: how Greater Cambridge is shaping the future

June was an exciting month for our Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (GCSP) team, securing wins at two prestigious awards.

The Planning Awards 2025

GCSP was honoured with a national award for its pioneering approach to tackling biodiversity loss linked to development, triumphing over five exceptional finalists.

The journey to this award began in 2022, when GCSP's Natural Environment team anticipated the growing urgency for nature-positive development. In response, they updated their Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document to align with the emerging Environment Act, requiring all new developments to deliver at least a 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). This bold step placed nature recovery at the core of the planning process.

With strong backing from local councillors, GCSP went further in 2023/24 by facilitating a network of BNG offsite habitat banks across Greater Cambridge. Partnering with Cambridgeshire County Council, The Wildlife Trust, Cambridge Past, Present and Future, and others, they identified strategic sites for habitat creation, restoration and enhancement.

Developers can now offset environmental impacts by funding the creation and long-term management of vital ecosystems offsite. Each habitat bank is legally protected and must be maintained for 30 years, ensuring real, measurable benefits for wildlife and the environment. This initiative places Greater Cambridge as a national leader in BNG delivery.

Planning Authority of the Year – East of England

GCSP was also crowned Planning Authority of the Year - East of England at the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) Awards for Planning Excellence the following week.

Formed in 2018 as a partnership between Cambridge City Council and ourselves, the team serve as the Local Planning Authority for the Greater Cambridge area. With a team of 160 colleagues, including 32 Chartered RTPI members and 21 working towards chartered status, the service processes over 7,000 planning applications annually. It has also earned accreditation for its commitment to quality and continuous improvement.

The RTPI award follows a compelling nomination that showcased the service's transformative work across Greater Cambridge, including:

- **Youth Engagement Service:** A nationally recognised programme giving young people a voice in planning and design.
- **Inclusive Planning:** Through initiatives like the Cambridge Neighbourhoods Design Code, to tackle inequality and improve access to green spaces in some of the region's most deprived areas.
- **Apprenticeship and Talent Development:** A structured programme supporting future planners through hands-on experience and academic study, ensuring a strong pipeline of planning professionals.
- **Biodiversity Net Gain Leadership:** Securing over 200 hectares of habitat for biodiversity offsetting, ahead of national policy requirements.

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How AI is helping us hear every voice, faster

Engaging with residents, businesses, community groups and other stakeholders is a core principle of the planning system as we shape the future of Greater Cambridge.

In the most recent Local Plan consultation, our Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service (GCSP) received over 9,500 public comments. These ranged from professionally prepared submissions from commercial organisations to hand-written submissions from residents. Logging and summarising each one took planners more than 450 days.

To find a more efficient and effective way to summarise planning submissions, GCSP secured government funding to develop a tool to improve this process.

Developed in partnership with the University of Liverpool, PlanAI is an artificial intelligence (AI) tool specifically designed to process and summarise the thousands of comments that are submitted during planning policy consultations. It was trained on over 100,000 submissions received by GCSP, as well as frequently used planning terminology, to uniquely tailor the tool to both planning policy and Greater Cambridge.

The tool was tested on three public consultations, generating summaries of each submission, while planning officers simultaneously created manual summaries.

When comparing the AI summaries to the human generated ones, there were no noticeable differences in quality. Remarkably, while the planners spent 18.5 hours summarising over 300 comments, it took PlanAI just 16 minutes to summarise and collate an overall consultation report, identifying key themes people had raised in their submissions. This was far quicker than the original 60% time saving target.

Two focus groups were held to hear what members of the public and planning stakeholders thought about developing an AI tool to undertake this part of the planning consultation process. The feedback we received was incredibly valuable and has helped inform the development of the tool, as well as our processes.

PlanAI is specifically designed to process and summarise the thousands of comments that are submitted during planning policy consultations.

Planners will continue to read every submission. However, PlanAI will support the process by generating summaries, not making decisions. This administrative aid frees up planners to focus on technical tasks - like preparing evidence for the new Local Plan or supporting parish councils with Neighbourhood Plans.

Our Lead Cabinet Member for Planning, Cllr Dr. Tumi Hawkins, said:

> **“Our Shared Planning service is one of the first local authorities in the UK to commission its own bespoke AI tool. It’s helping us to deliver reliable and meaningful insights into community views on proposed developments and planning policies more efficiently, so we can optimise the use of officer resources.”**

You can find out more about the tool and focus groups at www.greatercambridgeplanning/ai

Have your say: Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document

This summer, we, along with Cambridge City Council, are re-consulting on the draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) as modifications have been made.

The Councils have made necessary modifications to the SPD that consider representation received during the previous consultation and have published further evidence alongside the SPD.

The SPD provides guidance on planning obligations, also known as section 106 agreements. It has been prepared to provide guidance on how the Councils will approach the use of planning obligations to mitigate the impact of new developments. Contributions vary depending on the nature of the development, location and the scale of its local and wider impacts. Examples of this may include money to support schools and healthcare, improving cycling, walking and wheeling infrastructure, and protecting nature by enhancing habitats and planting more greenery.

This SPD is part of a wider effort to make the Section 106 process clearer and more efficient. It aims to improve transparency for developers and residents and clarify what contributions may be required to support sustainable and high-quality development across the area.

Following an initial consultation last year, the draft SPD was reviewed and updated based on the comments received.

This consultation closes at 5pm on Friday 17th October. To read and comment on the SPD, visit **https://greatercambridgeplanning.org/spd**

Improving planning decisions for you

Our Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service is updating how planning decisions are made to improve clarity, consistency, and efficiency.

Following a review of the planning committees that the service covers both for us and Cambridge City Council, and in response to national guidance, the Councils are aligning their constitutions and introducing a single, streamlined Scheme of Delegation. This means:

- **More focus on major applications:** Committees will concentrate on complex or controversial developments, while simpler applications will be handled by officers.
- **Clearer triggers for committee review:** Applications will only go to committee if they meet specific criteria such as significant departures from the Local Plan, proposals involving Council-owned land or buildings, applications made by a Councillor or officer, or proposals for demolition of a listed building.
- **New delegation panels:** These panels will review call-in requests from councillors or parish councils for applications to be decided by the planning committee, ensuring fair and consistent decisions without unnecessary delays.
- **Greater transparency:** Residents will benefit from a clearer understanding of how and why planning decisions are made, with consistent rules across the area.

These changes seek to enhance the effectiveness and consistency of the planning process across the shared service area. By focusing committee time on high-impact applications and delegating routine decisions to officers, we aim to better serve the community and speed up decisions for straightforward applications.

A Capybara Experience at Shepreth Wildlife Park

Shepreth Wildlife Park are offering a fantastic experience for one lucky winner! This great prize is a capybara experience for four people - worth £325!

Immerse yourself in the enchanting world of capybaras with this exclusive experience, tailored for those aged 16 years and above. This 30-minute encounter not only grants you access to the wildlife park but also offers a rare chance to interact with these fascinating creatures.

As you enter their habitat, be prepared for heart-warming moments. The capybaras, known for their gentle nature, may approach you with curiosity. Experience the joy of feeding them bamboo, a delightful exchange that creates a connection between you and these charming animals.

But the adventure doesn't stop there – the capybaras often display a friendly demeanour, allowing you the privilege of gently stroking them. It's a unique opportunity to appreciate the beauty of these creatures up close and personal.

Shepreth Wildlife Park, nestled in the scenic village of Shepreth between Cambridge and Royston, first opened its gates to the public in 1984 after evolving from a private sanctuary for injured and orphaned wildlife.

Today, the family-run wildlife park is home to over 100 species - from majestic big cats, maned wolves, red pandas, and tigers to meerkats, bats, reptiles, and even a busy hedgehog hospital. Find out more about the Park and Capybara Experience at: www.sheprethwildlifepark.co.uk/product/capybara-experience

To enter

To be in with a chance of winning, just answer this question:

The law has changed so that postal vote applications no longer last indefinitely – they now expire after how many years?

a) Three

b) 10

c) 25

You can enter the competition online. www.scambs.gov.uk

Click 'Apply' and then 'Reader's competition'.

Don't have Internet access?
You can enter by post. Send your name, address and telephone number, along with your answer to the question, to:

South Cambs Magazine Competition,
South Cambridgeshire District Council, Cambourne Business Park, Cambourne, CB23 6EA

Closing date for entries is 5pm on Friday 3 October.

The terms and conditions for our Reader Competition are available at www.scambs.gov.uk/t-c or can be requested by calling us.

The winner will be notified in October and announced in the winter issue of South Cambs Magazine.

Winner's spotlight

The winner of our previous competition was Harry Hutchinson from Hardwick. Harry won a three-month golf membership at Girton Golf Club and said: "It feels great to win this competition. I didn't expect to be the lucky winner! I am very much looking forward to playing at Girton Golf Club."

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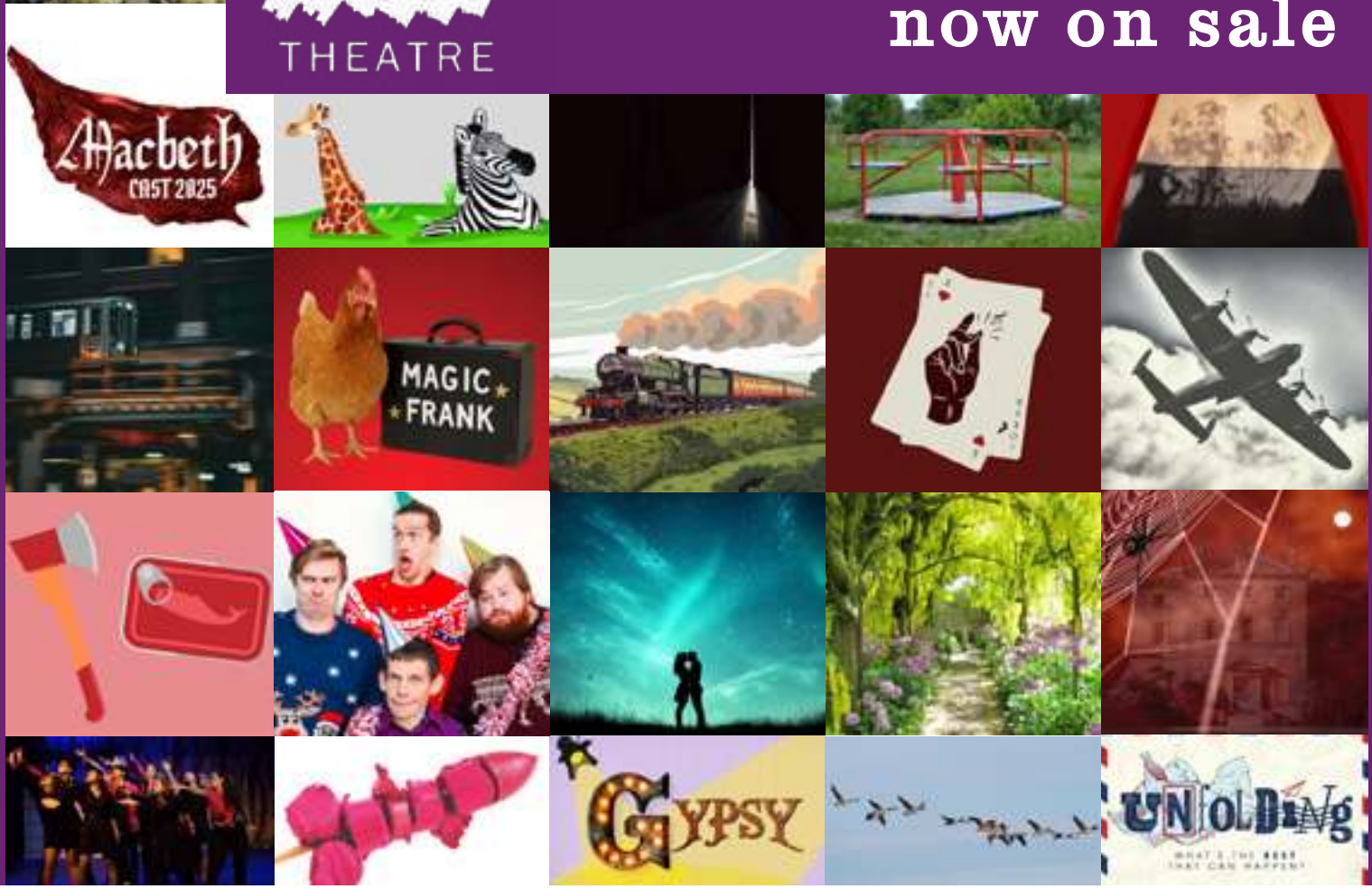

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